

Night 2: Al-Baqara 124-242 (Continued from Yesterday)

The Prophetic Mission to the Muslims (Ayaah 124-152)

To prepare the Muslims, the surah then talks about Ibraheem (AS), his pious life, and his devotion and submission to Allah^{SWT}. Ibraheem^{AS} was appointed the custodian of the House of Allah^{SWT} and the leader of mankind because he proved himself in every test that he was put through. Allah^{SWT} fulfilled a prayer of Ibraheem^{AS} to raise a Muslim Ummah: *“Our Lord! make us Muslims [in submission] to You, and [raise] from our progeny a Muslim nation submitting to You...”* [2:128] Muslims are the heirs to Ibraheem^{AS}’s legacy. Jews forfeited their right to inherit it when they persisted in disobeying Allaah SWT.

Basics of Deen and Personal Resources (Ayaah 153-157)

The change of Qibla -- the direction of Salaah, from Jerusalem to Makkah [2:144-150] symbolizes the transfer of the Prophetic mission to the Muslims: *“Thus We have made you an Ummah justly balanced that you will be witnesses over the people, and the Messenger a witness over yourselves.”* Allah^{SWT} then tells Muslims that as an Ummah they have to promote the jama’ah and do some things collectively, such as congregation prayers, Ramadan fasting, Hajj and jihad for His sake. Muslims should always be mindful of Allaah’s presence and glorify. *“So remember Me; I will remember you.”* [2:152]. They are also commanded to seek Allaah’s help through Sabtr and Salaah. To emphasize this Allaah SWT tells them, *“And We will surely test you with something of fear, and hunger, and some loss of wealth, and lives and fruits, but give good news to those who practice Sabr (patiently persevere).”* [The story of Safa and Marwah is told next because it represents Sabr, hope, and trust in Allah^{SWT}. It is a story about Hajar (wife of Ibraheem^{AS}) and their son Ismaeel^{AS}. How she agreed to live with her infant son alone in a desert valley of Makkah, with no inhabitants, only because it was the command of Allah^{SWT}. Immediately following the virtues of Sabr and Salaah, Allah^{SWT} establishes important foundation of Deen (religion):

1. *Tawheed*: Faith in Allah alone as God: *“And your Allah is one Allah; there is no god but Him..”* [2:163]

2. *Hubullaah*: The love of Allah^{SWT}

3. Obedience of RasulAllah^{SAW}

Then come some of the most important principles of Shariah (Islamic laws):

1. All good things on earth are permissible, except those which are forbidden.
2. The authority to make things prohibited rests only on Allah^{SWT} and no one else.
3. Things prohibited are specified by Allah^{SWT}
4. The prohibitions can be relaxed in the face of dire human needs: *“but if one is driven by necessity, not desire, nor exceeding the limits, there is no sin upon him.”* [2:173]
5. Hiding Allah’s Message is a grave sin: *“Those who conceal Allah’s revelations in the Book and exchange it for a small price -- they swallow nothing but fire into their bellies; and Allah will not speak to them on the Day of Resurrection...”* [2:174]

The surah talks about fasting during as an obligatory act to attain taqwa: *“O you who believe! fasting is prescribed for you, as it was prescribed to those before you, so that you may (learn) self-restraint.”* It also describes Hajj as an obligation and a source of purification. The purification is achieved through sacrifices of leaving the home and family and occupation, traveling to far off destinations, and spending only for the pleasure of Allah^{SWT}.

The Social Responsibilities (Ayaah 178-242)

The surah now moves to social responsibilities. Five things are protected: 1. Life, 2. Religion, 3. Property, 4. Lineage, and 5. Honor. A Muslim is therefore obligated to mold it into his life.

Hence, in this section, the Quran takes up the teachings, principles, and laws to develop such Taqwa. The surah describes Jihad as a way to protect the right to practice religion and fulfill the mission of Allah^{SWT}, and to protect the life, property, and honor of the Muslim Ummah -- consequently, fighting is permitted only under certain circumstances: *“Fight in the cause of Allah^{SWT} [with] those who fight you but do not commit aggression. Indeed, Allah^{SWT} does not like aggressors.”* This surah commands Muslims that no one can be forced to accept Islam. Drinking and gambling is prohibited to protect the society from evils. Rights of orphans oppressed and women are discussed next. Muslims are told to protect their honor and property and deal with orphans in a just and kind manner.